

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317
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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BAGHDAD 842 ACTION SECSTTATE MAY 18.

QUOTE BAGHDAD 0842

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IZ, US

SUBJECT: UNDERSECRETARY HABIB MEETS WITH IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTER

1. SUMMARY: UNDERSECRETARY HABIB HAD TWO HOUR MEETING
WITH IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTER HAMMADI ON MAY 16. HABIB
EXPRESSED USG INTEREST IN NORMALIZING US-IRAQI RELATIONS

AND EXPLAINED USG VIEWS ON A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.
HAMMADI EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF
ACHIEVING A SETTLEMENT AND SAID GOI NOT YET READY TO
RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. BEFORE DOING SO IT WOULD NEED
EVIDENCE THAT USG NOT INTERFERING IN IRAQI INTERNAL AFFAIRS
AND THAT USG HAD ALTERED IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY ITS
POLICIES OF HOSTILITY TOWARD THE ARABS ON ARAB-ISRAELI
SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317

ISSUES. HABIB GAVE ASSURANCE THAT USG DOES NOT AND WILL
NOT INTERFERE IN IRAQI INTERNAL AFFAIRS. HE SAID THAT
USG POLICIES WERE NOT HOSTILE TO THE ARABS AND WERE
CONSISTENT WITH ARAB DEVELOPMENT AND LEGITIMATE
ASPIRATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN RESPONSE TO OUR APPROACH, USINT WAS INFORMED
BY FOREIGN MINISTRY ON MAY 15 THAT UNDERSECRETARY
HABIB WOULD BE WELCOME IN IRAQ. HABIB ARRIVED IN
BAGHDAD THAT SAME EVENING. ON MORNING OF MAY 16

FOREIGN MINISTRY CHIEF OF PROTOCOL ARRANGED MEETING BETWEEN HABIB AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAMMADI AT NOON. HABIB AND USINT PRINCIPAL OFFICER WILEY ATTENDED MEETING ALONG WITH TWO NOTE TAKERS FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. FOREIGN MINISTRY ARRANGED FOR TV PHOTOGRAPHERS TO FILM OPENING OF MEETING.

3. AFTER OPENING COURTESIES, HABIB DELIVERED PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO HAMMADI FOR DELIVERY TO PRESIDENT BAKR. HABIB SAID THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAQ AND THE UNITED STATES AND ALSO TO HAVE AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON LARGER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES SUCH AS THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS IN BAGHDAD TO LISTEN TO IRAQI VIEWS AS WELL AS TO EXPLAIN USG POSITIONS.

4. DURING CONVERSATION HABIB REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT USG IS INTERESTED IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ. IT WOULD BE TEN YEARS NEXT MONTH SINCE THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ HAD BROKEN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND USG BELIEVED THE TIME HAD COME TO RESTORE NORMAL RELATIONS. HABIB SAID USG IS FLEXIBLE ON THE MODALITIES AND WOULD BE WILLING TO PROCEED ON THE ALGERIAN MODEL WHERE THE UNITED STATES AND ALGERIA HAD AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO RESUME RELATIONS WITH SPECIFIC DATES TO BE
SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317

MUTUALLY AGREED AT A LATER TIME. USG IS ALSO READY FOR IMMEDIATE RESUMPTION SHOULD THE GOI SO DESIRE.

5. HABIB THEN SAID THAT WE WERE AWARE THAT THE GOI HAD SOME CONCERNS OVER THE HISTORY OF THE KURDISH SITUATION. HE SAID THAT HE WISHED TO GIVE UNEQUIVOCAL ASSURANCES TO THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ THAT THE USG IS NOT NOW AND WILL NOT IN THE FUTURE SUPPORT ANY DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ. THIS SHOULD NO LONGER BE AN ELEMENT THAT AFFECTS OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS.

6. HABIB THEN GAVE A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE STEPS THE USG HAD UNDERTAKEN TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT AN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT. HE SAID THE USG HOPES THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO CONVENE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IN THE FALL OF 1977 BUT RECOGNIZES THAT IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO LAY SOME GROUNDWORK IN ADVANCE IF THE CONFERENCE IS TO BE SUCCESSFUL. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE USG IS ENCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT ALL PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT NOW SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WOULD BE IN THEIR INTERESTS AND ALSO BY THE FACT THAT ALL SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT THE USG CAN PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN BRINGING

ABOUT A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME.

7. FOREIGN MINISTER HAMMADI THANKED HABIB FOR HIS PRESENTATION AND SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS CAN BE USEFUL AND IS ALWAYS INTERESTED IN LISTENING TO WHAT THE USG HAS TO SAY ON THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES. HE THEN SAID THAT THE KURDISH PROBLEM IS NOT A "TERRIFYING" ISSUE TO IRAQ AND THAT THE GOI WOULD DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO FACE AND SOLVE THE PROBLEM. HE MADE THE POINT THAT HE THOUGHT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE BOTH MORE WILLING AND MORE ABLE TO EXPLOIT MINORITY PROBLEMS
SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317

IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAN THE UNITED STATES. HABIB ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY INDICATION THAT THE SOVIETS WERE DOING THAT NOW, AND HAMMADI REPLIED THAT THERE WERE NO SUCH INDICATIONS. HAMMADI THEN SAID THAT OUR ASSURANCES ON THE KURDISH QUESTION REPRESENTED A WELCOME CHANGE OF MORAL AND POLITICAL ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES AND WAS WELCOMED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ.

8. HAMMADI SAID THAT THE IMPORTANT QUESTION IN THE MINDS OF THE IRAQIS WAS WHETHER THE NEW UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION HAS ADOPTED A NEW POLICY ON THE PALESTINE ISSUE. HABIB REPLIED THAT THE USG POLICY TOWARDS THIS ISSUE IS EVOLVING BUT DEPENDS TO A LARGE EXTENT ON THE VIEWS AND ATTITUDES OF THE CONCERNED PARTIES. HE NOTED PLO REFUSAL TO ACCEPT THE RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST. THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT THAT THE US WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL AS A STATE. REGARDING HAMMADI'S QUESTION ON PALESTINE, THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID THAT THERE SHOULD BE A HOMELAND FOR THE PALESTINIANS BUT WE CANNOT DEFINE THIS FURTHER UNTIL THE MODALITIES OF A SETTLEMENT BECOME CLEARER.

9. HAMMADI THEN ASKED A SERIES OF QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE POLICIES OF THE CONCERNED ARAB STATES TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT AND SEEMED PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN WHETHER THEY HAD REACHED AGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES. HABIB EXPLAINED THAT THE POSITIONS OF ALL PARTIES ARE STILL EVOLVING AND THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS AND ON SOME ISSUES THERE WERE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW.

10. HAMMADI EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT A SETTLEMENT WOULD BE POSSIBLE IN VIEW OF THE MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ARAB AND ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW. HABIB AGREED THAT THERE WERE SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES BUT SAID USG WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT ALL PARTIES HAD
SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317

ACCEPTED THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS WHICH IS NOW UNDERWAY AND WELCOMED THE US EFFORT TO FACILITATE A SETTLEMENT. ALL PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT NOW SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND THAT A RENEWED OUTBREAK OF WAR WOULD NOT SERVE THEIR INTERESTS. HAMMADI CONTINUED TO EXPRESS SKEPTICISM THAT THE PRESENT PROCESS COULD IN FACT LEAD TO A SETTLEMENT. HE SAID THAT ISRAEL BEING MILITARILY THE STRONGER PARTY WOULD INSIST ON CONDITIONS WHICH, IF ACCEPTED BY THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS, WOULD LEAD TO THEIR DOWNFALL.

11. AFTER CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION OF THIS ISSUE, HABIB RETURNED TO THE SUBJECT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS AND SAID THAT HE WAS PLEASED BY THE INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY HAMMADI DISPLAYED IN DISCUSSING THESE ISSUES AND THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF BOTH THE US AND IRAQ TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS SO THAT WE WOULD HAVE BETTER ACCESS TO EACH OTHER'S POINTS OF VIEW AND COULD CONTINUE THIS TYPE OF DISCUSSION ON A MORE REGULAR BASIS. BEFORE REPLYING DIRECTLY HAMMADI BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF GULF SECURITY AND SAID THAT THE GOI BELIEVES THAT THE US MUST SOMEHOW BE INVOLVED IN CURRENT EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE A COLLECTIVE SECURITY AGREEMENT FOR THE GULF. IRAQ BELIEVES THAT A COLLECTIVE SECURITY PACT WOULD ONLY CREATE A NEW MILITARY BLOC AND THAT WOULD IN TURN GENERATE COUNTER BLOCS AND LEAD TO FURTHER CONFLICT. HABIB SAID THAT THE USG WAS IN NO WAY INVOLVED IN EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE A COLLECTIVE SECURITY PACKAGE IN THE GULF, BUT THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO THIS SUBJECT FURTHER AFTER HE RETURNED TO WASHINGTON.

12. HAMMADI THEN RETURNED TO THE SUBJECT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS AND SAID THAT IRAQ BELIEVES THE US WAS THE MAIN SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL AND THAT ITS CREATION AND SUPPORT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL WAS AN ACT OF HOSTILITY
SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317

TOWARDS THE ARABS. HE SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD ACTED ABSOLUTELY CONTRARY TO THE BASIC INTEREST OF THE ARAB WORLD BY CREATING AN ALIEN STATE AND COLONIZING IT ON THE ARAB HOMELAND. THE GOI DID NOT EXPECT THE US TO COMPLETELY REVERSE ITS POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL, BUT IT WAS STILL WAITING FOR EVIDENCE OF A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE US POLICY OF HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE ARABS. IRAQ ALSO WANTED EVIDENCE THAT THE USG HAD CEASED ITS POLICY OF INTERFERENCE IN IRAQI INTERNAL AFFAIRS. AT THIS POINT HABIB INTERRUPTED TO SAY THAT HE WAS GIVING FLAT ASSURANCES BOTH PERSONALLY AND OFFICIALLY THAT THE USG WAS NOT

INTERFERING AND WOULD NOT INTERFERE IN IRAQ'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. AS FOR THE OTHER CONDITIONS, THE USG WAS ENDEAVORING TO ASSIST THE COUNTRIES OF THE AREA TO FIND A JUST AND DURABLE SOLUTION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT THAT WOULD RESPECT THE INTERESTS AND CONCERNS OF ALL SIDES. THE USG CANNOT ACCEPT THE CHARGE THAT IT HAS BEEN HOSTILE TOWARDS THE ARAB NATION NOR THAT USG POLICIES ARE INCONSISTENT WITH THE DEVELOPMENT AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE ARAB WORLD.

13. HABIB SAID THAT WE WILL REMAIN READY TO TAKE STEPS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WHENEVER THE IRAQIS WISH TO DO SO, AND IN THE MEANTIME WOULD CONTINUE TO ASSIGN A SENIOR OFFICER AS PRINCIPAL OFFICER OF THE UNITED STATES INTERESTS SECTION IN BAGHDAD. WE WOULD HOPE THE IRAQIS WOULD DO THE SAME IN THEIR INTERESTS SECTION IN WASHINGTON. HAMMADI SAID THAT HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN MEETING WITH SECRETARY VANCE AT A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT TIME AND PLACE. HABIB ASKED IF HE WOULD BE IN PARIS FOR THE CIED CONFERENCE AT THE END OF MAY AND HAMMADI SAID HE WOULD NOT BECAUSE THE MINISTER OF OIL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE NEGOTIATIONS. HAMMADI ALSO SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE IN THE UNITED SECRET

PAGE 07 STATE 113940 TOSEC 040317

STATES UNTIL THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN SEPTEMBER BUT HE WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING SECRETARY VANCE AT THAT TIME IF THERE WAS NO CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY PRIOR TO THEN. HAMMADI SAID THAT VICE CHAIRMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE USG FOR ITS HELP IN PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR HIS RECENT BACK PROBLEMS AND HABIB SAID THAT WE WERE PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN OF SERVICE. EARLIER IN THE CONVERSATION HAMMADI MADE A POINT OF NOTING THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS NOT ABLE TO MEET WITH HABIB BECAUSE HE IS AT HOME CONVALESCING FROM HIS RECENT ILLNESS.

14. COMMENT: THE MEETING WAS NOT MARKED BY ANY SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS, BUT THE POLEMICS WERE LIMITED AND THE ATMOSPHERE CORDIAL. THE ICE WAS BROKEN AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT WISHES TO MAINTAIN A POLITICAL DIALOGUE. THEY ARE CAUTIOUS, BUT WE DID NOT EXPECT ANY DRAMATIC RESPONSE FROM HAMMADI. WE HAVE INDICATED OUR WILLINGNESS FOR IMPROVING RELATIONS. WE NEED TO LET IT BE CONSIDERED THOROUGHLY BY THE LEADERSHIP AND THEN FOLLOW UP IN APPROPRIATE FASHION.
WILEY UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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